

# Volunteer Capabilities Overview

The SAHS is an independent non-profit organization relying on the generosity and commitment of volunteers. Whether at the shelter or Brooks Spay/Neuter Clinic, the role of volunteers is to assist the staff in completing daily operational tasks to fulfill the mission and vision of the SAHS. To this end, volunteers of any capacity are expected to safely and efficiently perform any and all necessary tasks related to their assignment. The SAHS is all-inclusive and we are dedicated to respecting and accepting the differences of all individuals. With that said, the safety of all individuals and pets within our organization remains our highest priority. The SAHS will consider accommodation requests and will provide reasonable accommodations when possible to enable persons with disabilities to volunteer; however, we reserve the right to restrict or release volunteers according to safety and organizational necessity.

The SAHS does not have the space or resources to provide a therapeutic experience for the sole benefit of a volunteer. Volunteers provide safe operational support to staff by caring for pets until they get adopted. Therefore, we cannot accommodate job coach/client pairs seeking primarily an animal therapy experience. Staff are unable to create projects solely for the benefit of the volunteer.

*Please consider the following minimum volunteer capabilities:*

## *PHYSICAL CAPABILITIES*

- Quick reflexes and ability to use both hands simultaneously (example: open cage door while handling pet).
- Ability to travel unaided on unpaved, uneven, rugged, slippery, and sometimes muddy terrain (both indoors and outdoors), as well as maneuver cramped spaces.
- Ability to bend and squat in order to leash/harness, and/or pick up a pet.
- Ability to stand for significant periods of time while walking dogs, socializing cats, or cleaning cages/kennels.
- Average vision (with or without correction) to move safely throughout the building, distinguish animal body language, as well as read instructions and a pet's paperwork.
- Ability to hear if an animal is giving warnings, such as growling, yelping, or hissing.
- Ability to effectively communicate verbally.
- Ability to react quickly in order to prevent dogs or cats from escaping (example: the ability to quickly pursue and retrieve any cats or dogs who have escaped from a kennel or cage).
- Ability to cope with a very loud environment due to animal noises.
- Ability to deal with strong and unpleasant odors, fleas, ticks, feces, and possible wounds or injuries to pets in our care.

## COGNITIVE CAPABILITIES

- Ability, once trained, to work independently with minimal supervision, while recognizing limitations in knowledge and abilities, knowing when to ask for help if needed.
- If lacking the ability to work independently, whether due to age and/or neurological abnormality, must be able to work alongside a job coach/caregiver with focused attention on the task at hand.
- Ability to read and understand instructions and procedures.
- Ability to understand, remember, and follow instructions and procedures.
- Basic reading, writing, spelling, and communication skills.
- Ability to problem-solve.
- Ability to handle redirection and constructive criticism without responding with negativity.
- Ability to recognize potentially hazardous situations when working with animals.
- Ability to remain calm with animals who are upset, behave sensitively and confidently, and act appropriately in these situations.
- Ability to communicate professionally and politely.
- Acceptance of the boundaries between the role of the volunteer and the role of the staff.
- Ability to cope with a highly emotionally charged environment with some animals that are homeless, abandoned, and/or abused, as well as the reality that some of the animals in our care may be euthanized.
- Maintain a positive attitude and a solution-oriented approach to challenging situations, rather than resorting to complaining or gossiping.
- Ability to understand the SAHS policies and procedures and the willingness to appropriately and accurately represent those policies when interacting with the public or otherwise representing the SAHS.

*Individuals unable to meet the minimum volunteer capabilities outlined above may still volunteer if accompanied by a caregiver or job coach. Please consider the following policies if volunteering with a caregiver/job coach:*

- Volunteers must provide their own caregiver/job coach at all times—throughout orientation, training, and volunteering.
  - Volunteers or their job coach/caregiver can request an assessment after three months to determine if the volunteer can independently and successfully perform required tasks.
- The caregiver/job coach must accompany their client through orientation, training, and while volunteering, and be responsible for their client's schedule, including the recording of hours served.

- SAHS cannot provide additional supervision in place of a responsible caregiver/job coach. Any substitute or replacement must first complete our orientation and training process before accompanying a client.
- There should never be more than four volunteers per caregiver/job coach at any time.
- The volunteer, with the assistance of their caregiver/job coach, must be able to perform all tasks necessary to their assignment and follow all safety protocols.
- Job coaches are responsible for staying up-to-date on shelter procedural changes as they occur.